



NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION *of*  
REALTORS®

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January 30, 2018

Chairman Mike Enzi  
Primary Health and Retirement Security  
Subcommittee  
Senate HELP Committee  
379A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Bernie Sanders  
Primary Health and Retirement  
Security Subcommittee  
Senate HELP Committee  
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Enzi and Ranking Member Sanders:

On behalf of the 1.3 million members of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), I thank you for scheduling the Roundtable on Small Business Health Plans. As self-employed, independent contractors and small business owners, REALTORS® are all too familiar with the frustrations and lack of affordable health insurance options found in the individual or small group markets. NAR welcomes your efforts to bring attention to possible solutions, such as the Department of Labor's notice of proposed rulemaking on Association Health Plans that addresses the health care needs of the self-employed and lack of affordable health insurance options.

NAR is America's largest trade association, representing members, including NAR's institutes, societies, and councils, involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries. Members belong to one or more of approximately 1,200 local associations/boards and 54 state and territory associations of REALTORS®.

As an association, NAR has demonstrated its ability to deliver a wide array of services and goods to members. Affordable health insurance is one benefit that our members continue to request but which, despite our best efforts, NAR has struggled to offer. As a result, NAR has long advocated for reforms that would make offering health insurance easier and more affordable for our members.

Small Business Health Plans or Association Health Plans (AHPs) have the potential to make this possible by allowing associations to arrange group health insurance coverage for members. For real estate professionals, access to group health insurance would be a welcomed escape from the more costly individual market. Increased flexibility in plan design and greater negotiating power to bargain for lower premiums could help NAR members save money and better focus their financial resources on serving their clients.

NAR strongly believes that the inclusion of nondiscrimination consumer protections in any AHP proposal is key, especially given that the median age of REALTORS® in 2017 was 53 years old. By prohibiting discrimination based on health status, there will be reduced potential for adverse selection while encouraging participation by those with less favorable health ratings.

NAR supports the Department of Labor's proposed rule to increase access to Association Health Plans, but without the imposition of burdensome or unnecessary requirements on participants, especially self-employed "working owners" like our members. The proposed rule's current definition excludes working owners that are eligible to participate in a subsidized group health plan maintained a spouse's employer. The rule also proposes a weekly or monthly minimum work hour requirement that

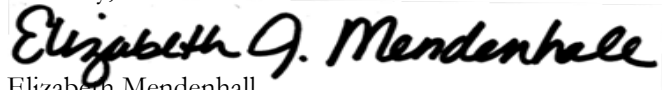


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ignores the seasonality of many self-employed persons, including residential sales professionals, whose services may vary depending on the time of year. Such provisions significantly reduce the pool of working owners who could have access to more affordable association coverage options for their families.

The need for affordable health insurance options remains a top concern among practicing real estate professionals. Ensuring that self-employed independent contractors have access to AHPs is essential to fostering a robust marketplace. NAR welcomes the Committee's attention on this important issue and looks forward to working with you and the Department of Labor to improve access to affordable health insurance for the nation's self-employed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth G. Mendenhall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth Mendenhall

2018 President, National Association of REALTORS®